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ABSTRACT

Lay advisory committees for the humanities offer community colleges a means of maintaining connections with the communities they serve. These groups can provide information and advice on ways to encourage students to enroll in liberal arts courses, the characteristics of liberal arts students, ways of developing modules for occupational courses, appropriate extracurricular offerings and off-campus liberal arts events, and community potentials for internships and jobs for students. Members of the committees, who may be community leaders, museum directors, librarians, scientists, artists, and other professionals committed to the arts and sciences, can offer valuable assistence in helping students and graduates find jobs or gain admission to upper-division programs, establish selection processes for honors programs, set up and conduct effective follow-up procedures, develop community surveys, and establish programs for gifted students. In addition, lay advisory committees can be involved in instructional matters and community outreach, offering new avenues for integrating the college with its community resources. Committees of this sort have been established in various parts of the country; e.g., in the St. Louis Community Colleges committees have been formed for mass communications and commercial art, round table meetings are held regularly at West Los Angeles College, and efforts have been undertaken at Miami-Dade Community College to coordinate the efforts of its many advisory committees. (LL)

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CSCC Bulletin
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BULLETIN

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Developing Lay Advisory Committees to the Liberal Arts

In order to maintain their currency, community college programs need connections with the communities they serve. An advisory committee, comprised of selected individuals who work directly with the college on pertinent issues, can help by acting as a viable connector.

Whatever it is called—Citizens' Advisory Group, Advisory Committee for the Liberal Arts, or Lay Advisory Committee—this type of group offers the college a valuable community resource. It can provide information, advice, and visibility for academic programs; review information on trends in the liberal arts on local, state, and national levels; offer policy reactions and comments on programs from the points of view of persons outside the college; and aid in planning special events. Members of an advisory committee to the liberal arts are able to bridge the gap between "town and gown", to integrate educational efforts with community offerings and opportunities. Some members of the group may be in a position to employ students who are completing a community college program or to suggest areas of employment. Others may be able to show how the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences can become integral parts of life, whether one pursues them for occupational purposes or for non-vocational interests.

Occupational programs have had advisory committees for years. This issue of *The Bulletin* considers several questions related to the formation and operation of Advisory Committees to the Liberal Arts: What are the committee's responsibilities? Who are its constituents? How does it function, and to what purposes?

Membership

Except for the college representative, members of advisory committees are selected from outside both the host institution and the education profession. They may include community leaders, museum directors, librarians, bank officials, people in business, scientists, artists and musicians, directors of radio and television stations, and professionals committed to the arts and sciences. Whatever their profession, it is essential that those who are appointed to an advisory committee understand the image, philosophy, and capabilities of the college they represent. These basic characteristics can be described in an orientation session that delineates the liberal arts programs and continuing education offerings. The introduction could also detail various efforts to employ students with local businesses. In addition, advisory board members should be interested in at least one facet of the arts, humanities, sciences or social sciences – either through their vocation or avocational pursuits.

It is equally important that the committee's guidelines provide for rotation of its members. One popular rotation method calls for replacing one-third of the advisory committee each year. When the committee is first formed, one-third will be assigned one-year appointments; one-thirds, two-year appointments, and one-third, three-year appointments. This procedure thus provides for both continuing and new members each year. Another approach to ensure rotation is to choose initially a group to serve for three years and then in the second year to add new members as needed.

People serving on an advisory committee should include a chairperson and secretary, a college representative, and selected members of the college's service area. The principal function of the chairperson, who is generally elected by the committee, is to preside at all meetings. This individual should work closely with faculty of the college in determining issues to be discussed in the meetings. The committee secretary, who also may be elected by the committee from among its members, should have a close working relationship with the other members. In view of the considerable routine, time-consuming work entailed in this position, it is recommended that a person working on campus be chosen for this office. And since few members of the committee will have sufficient time for this responsibility, the institution might compensate the secretary, perhaps by assigning release time.

The liberal arts department or division head usually becomes the college representative, thus acting as liaison between the committee and the college. Since having several instructors regularly in attendance at meetings might stifle free discussion and interfere with the committee's work, faculty members other than the official college representative meet with advisory committees only when invited, usually on a rotating basis. They attend meetings in order to elaborate on their courses, provide information not generally available, and, primarily, to receive – not to give – suggestions.

Because it is unrealistic to expect new committee members to possess extensive knowledge of the educational programs with which they will be involved, the college representative should apprise committee members of college activities, programs, and

Aside from the "positive image" brought by a group of prominent citizens, the committee can address certain important questions:

How can more students be encouraged to enroll in liberal arts courses?

What are the characteristics of these students?

How could liberal arts modules be developed for occupational courses?

What type of extracurricular offerings can be established by the college?

How can the college relate to the liberal arts off campus – e.g. museums, libraries, concerts?

Should courses be developed that are specific to the community – for example, the art of local Indian tribes?

Are liberal arts courses offered at convenient times for students who also work outside the college?

Could the committee provide awards for outstanding faculty members and outstanding students?

What are the community potentials for internships and jobs for students?

The committee can:

Encourage students of all ages to take courses in liberal arts by having committee members visit high schools, speak at civic clubs, attend career days, or write articles.

Provide information for counselors, parents, faculty, and students concerning the value of the arts, sciences, humanities, and social sciences.

Help students and graduates find jobs or admission to upper-division education programs;

Help establish selection processes for honors programs, scholarships, and other special awards to students;

Help college personnel set up and conduct effective follow-up procedures;

Assist in developing community surveys related to the liberal art;

Help establish special programs for gifted students;

Aid in exposing students to occupations not usually considered by graduates of these programs.

issues; inform them of the development of new courses; and familiarize them with the functions and objectives of the liberal arts programs. Key advisory committees to vocational programs have been handicapped occasionally because some school or college authorities, who did not recognize the necessity of having an informed group, had made no plans for orientation. Therefore, committee members were sometimes unable to appreciate the methods that the institution used in achieving its objectives, or to interpret its program to the public.

Questions and Activities

Designing an annual program for the advisory committee must be a joint effort of both the college and community members. Proper planning and guidance from college personnel can eliminate many of the frustrations that have caused some vocational education lay advisory committees to fold.

An advisory committee's effectiveness cannot be judged on the basis of a single meeting. The influence of an active group frequently reaches deeply into the community, and its contributions are not always tangible. In addition to the activities cited, the committee could consider sponsoring field trips for students and faculty, offering scholarships, assisting in job placements, and participating as guest lecturers or speakers at college events.

It is time that the liberal arts look to new modes of support. Advisory committees might well supply that support and offer new avenues for integrating the college with its community resources.

Several of these programs have been established in various parts of the country. For example, in Washington state, humanities faculty at Clark College formed a lay advisory committee as a result of a staff development retreat. At Shoreline and Olympic Community Colleges, lay advisory committees were formed by faculty members after they had attended workshops sponsored by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges.

In California's San Diego Community College District, a member of the English faculty obtained preliminary approval for an advisory committee from the District Executive Council, a group representing various constituencies from the four campuses. With backing from the Council, she spoke to a number of her colleagues, obtained their support, and then submitted a proposal to the District Board of Trustees. The result – a very active Lay Advisory Committee to the Humanities.

After a National Endowment for the Humanities consultant suggested that the humanities division at Brevard Community College in Florida establish an advisory group, the division chairperson met with each faculty member to explain the purposes and benefits of such a group and to respond to their concerns. When a majority of faculty members endorsed the idea, the humanities division met and voted to proceed with the plan.

At Sinclair College (Ohio), a major objective written into a National Humanities Faculty grant was the formation of an advisory committee. Its inclusion gave the concept legitimacy and increased faculty members' eagerness to work with the committee.

In Fall, 1982, The Center for the Study of Community Colleges asked deans and department chairs from 172

In instructional matters, the committee can:

Review offerings in the liberal arts and advise about changing conditions and needs in order to suggest new curriuclar directions, additions to, or deletions of courses.

Recommend procedures to implement and evaluate cooperative educational training plans and agreements between vocational programs and the liberal arts.

Assist in establishing a library of books, magazines, and audio-visual aids germane to the humanities.

Assist faculty members in tailoring instruction to the needs of the community.

Assess the adequacy of facilities, equipment, and teaching materials.

Recommend criteria for evaluating courses, programs, and instructors.

Define qualifications for instructors when teaching openings occur.

Recommend inservice programs to improve instructional competence.

Assist educators in developing goals, objectives, and activities.

In community outreach, the lay advisory committee can:

Assess the need for night classes and other means of outreach that relate specificially to current community needs and issues.

Establish lectures and other special programs to increase visibility and understanding in the community;

Suggest offerings and locations for community service;

Promote the liberal arts programs and concerns at college and community meetings;

Strengthen communities by identifying and responding to community needs.

colleges nationwide whether they had formed advisory groups for the humanities programs. Of the 151 respondents to this question, 17% indicated that their college did in fact have such a group. One half of these committees were formed since 1980. Since these lay citizen committees have been so successful as advisors to occupational programs, it would seem that they could well be exported to the liberal arts programs in many other post-secondary institutions.

Advisory Committees in St. Louis

Two Advisory boards to the Liberal Arts are functioning in St. Louis' Community Colleges: Mass Communications and Commercial Art. Members of each board, who are suggested by faculty, generally meet once per semester as a group. Occasionally they are consulted individually.

In the Mass Communications area, the Advisory Board helps keep the curriculum up to date – especially in terms of new technical developments and skills; advises on equipment purchases; acts as liaison between the college and the professional field. Individual members of the board also assist in placing students for their required internships. The board consists of representatives from St. Louis television and radio stations, cable television, area newspapers and magazines, and industry – about twelve in all.

In the case of Commercial Art, the Advisory Board consists of community artists and related industry representatives. They function in a manner similar to the Mass Communication Board. Each board operates under guidelines established by the College. St. Louis also publishes a booklet about advisory committees that offers information regarding organization, role, and rotation procedure. A short profile of the college with its three campuses is included.

Los Angeles' Roundtable and Arts Committee

West Los Angeles College is addressing its needs for an external committee through what its president, M. Jack Fujimoto, calls Round Table Meetings. These are comprised of various community advisory groups who meet with the president and selected senior staff to discuss ways in which the college can be more receptive and sensitive to the needs of the general population. Each Roundtable session is composed of selected individuals who represent a specific interest group; each session emphasizes the theme of "building bridges to the committees". From these sessions has come a request to form joint ventures with other community agencies and institutions to provide community services courses to meet general educational needs.

At East Los Angeles College, President Arthur Avila has formed an active advisory group to the Vincent Price Art Museum on its campus. This group, composed of several prominent citizens, advises on exhibitions, purchases, and ways to involve the community in this most outstanding college-based art museum.

Miami-Dade's Public School Efforts

By state law, Florida community colleges must have advisory boards for each of its Associate in Science programs. Miami-Dade Community Colleges is in the process of reviewing all of its advisory boards, with the purpose of making them both more representative and more productive in the ongoing process of program review.

In general, Miami-Dade Community College provides the technical programs for area residents, while the Dade County Public School System offers vocational programs which do not require technical training. In an effort to eliminate any duplication of services and activities, Miami-Dade is working with the Dade County Public Schools to coordinate the work of these various advisory boards.

Another unique example of the use of an advisory committee is the National Advisory Committee for all of the Nursing and Allied Health programs located at Miami-Dade Medical Center Campus. Authorities, recognized nationally for their expertise, serve on this National Advisory Committee to bring a breadth of perspective that is not always possible to obtain in a local area.

Finally, Miami-Dade Community College makes use of advisory committees in the development of its television and radio courses for Open College. When a new course is developed the College appoints a National Faculty Advisory Committee to assist in the design of the course and to review its development. A recent example was the development of a new course in macroeconomics for which a National Faculty Advisory Committee, made up of faculty members at participating institutions, worked with Miami-Dade to design the structure of the course.

Workshops to Advance the Liberal Arts and to Facilitate Transfer

Valuable information has emanated from the series of six workshops that began in Los Angeles on October 28, 1982. *Bulletin* #7 discussed highlights of the initial workshop on Transfer, Honors, and Excellence. St. Louis' efforts to define the curriculum highlighted both interdisciplinary and occupational programs.

In Phoenix on January 24, 1983, interdisciplinary studies were further addressed by a number of Maricopa faculty members who have eight-years of experience in this endeavor. An experiential "I and we" program provided a different approach to interdisciplinary studies.

Miami-Dade tackled the big question of defining the Associate of Arts degree. The college is now in active pursuit of this definition, which is basic to curriculum formation and outcome assessment.

Dallas' workshop, Liberal Arts in Occupational Areas was held on March 25, 1983, with William Slonecker from Chemeketa College, Salem, Oregon as keynote speaker. Chicago's emphasis on Student Academic Support Systems will take place on May 6, 1983. At this time, the Student Survey and General Academic Assessment, developed by the Center, will be presented together with results from pilot studies in five community colleges in Kansas and California.

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